William Penn

1644–1718

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IN PRESENTING THIS SYNOPSIS OF THE LIFE OF WILLIAM PENN WE ARE LARGELY INDEBTED TO

WILLIAM PENN

AS THE FOUNDER OF TWO COMMONWEALTHS

By AUGUSTUS C. BUELL

Published by D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, New York

W I L L I A M P E N N

A PATTERN of Alvin Sterling Silver Flat Ware, made in ounce goods, fancy pieces and cutlery, and may be had in chest combinations of great variety, from the most simple to that of the entire service.

The "William Penn" pattern is a design of old colonial style and the significance of the name was the fulfilment of a definite purpose, which recognized the availability of a design having the purity, simplicity, and sterling worth of its namesake.

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Identified with so much that is of interest in the early history of our country, the favor in which the "William Penn" is now established will be lasting.

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WILLIAM PENN

THE seventeenth century was essentially an epoch of warfare between kingly despotism and the conscience of the people. During that century, aspirations for religious liberty found embodiment in organized armies and achieved definite form in victory over the hosts of oppression and the hordes of bigotry. It witnessed two revolutions in England, in which the forces of the people were arrayed against monarchs who aimed at absolutism; in which religious freedom waged war against dynastic intolerance. The whole result was one king beheaded and another driven from his throne to die in exile.

The seventeenth century witnessed the emancipation of North Germany from the sway of the Holy Roman Empire. Its first half saw the Thirty Years' War, its last the complete religious liberation of North Germany, the growth of a great Protestant power in Prussia, and the elevation of the house of Hohenzollern to monarchy based upon toleration.

The seventeenth century saw the cause of religious freedom carried across the Atlantic and planted ineradicably in America; planted in isolated colonies, which were destined to blossom and bear fruit in the mightiest republic of earth's history.

In such an environment, and near the middle of such an era, William Penn was born, near the Tower of London, October 14th, 1644. It was the year of Marston Moor. When William Penn was only a year old, Cromwell, from the smoke and carnage of Naseby, proclaimed the cause of the people gained. He was little more than four years old when the Stuart king was beheaded at Whitehall.

His childhood and early youth, to the age of sixteen, were passed amid the scenes and subject to the austere yet simple popular thought and manners of the great Protectorate; the social atmosphere of Cromwell and the Puritans; the political inspirations of England, who then began to feel her power.

ADMIRAL SIR WILLIAM PENN
Father of William Penn

William Penn was naturally bright and studious, and the lessons of such a time could not fail to make a deep and lasting impression.

The character of William Penn presents three sides; the political, the commercial, and the religious. He came of seafaring and fighting stock on the paternal side. His father was Captain Sir William Penn, who later became Admiral of the British Navy. His mother was Margaret, daughter of John Jasper, an English merchant, who lived in Rotterdam as the resident partner of a London merchant.

The fact that William Penn's mother was a resident of Rotterdam at the time of her marriage has led many to believe he was half Dutch, which is erroneous. Margaret Jasper and Captain Penn were both English subjects and their son a thoroughbred Englishman.

Captain Penn followed the sea from the age of ten, when his father, Giles Penn, a captain of the English merchant service, took him on his first voyage, from which time he learned the mariner's art, step by step, by hard actual experience.

In 1638, at the age of seventeen, his father secured for him the warrant of master's mate in the English Navy, and his ability is amply demonstrated by the rapidity of his promotion. At nineteen he was appointed Master Commandant, at twenty-one Second Captain of Blake's flagship, at twenty-three Post Captain of the "Speaker," a new second-rate ship spoken of as "the best built ship of her time." He held his Captaincy a little less than a year when he was promoted to Rear Admiral. This was in 1645, a year after William Penn's birth. His unusual success and popularity continued to follow him, and in 1651, when only thirty, he was promoted to the highest rank a sea-going officer could then attain—Vice-Admiral of England—inferior only to the Lord High Admiral.

In 1655 the uncertain fortunes of war made themselves manifest to the young Admiral. He returned from a cruise to Cuba, where he had gone the previous year with a fleet of fifty-four ships, including sixteen transports, with a force of 4200 men on board, to strike a blow against Spain in her weakest part. This expedition was the first effort put forth by England, on a large scale, to employ her sea power offensively against distant foes. Drake had long before ravaged the Spanish Main, but his attacks were more the raids of a buccaneer than regular warfare.

This expedition of Rear Admiral Penn and General Venables, who commanded the land forces, failed most miserably, and on their return Cromwell took away the commissions of both and cast them into dungeons in the Tower.

To General Venables he said: "No doubt you did your best—in all things but one. You might have died with your soldiers!" To Penn, Cromwell imputed no particular blame, except that he had commanded the naval arm of a combined expedition that failed as a whole.

All these things happened while William Penn was a child. But, young as he was, the sudden misfortunes of his father deeply and ineradicably impressed his mind. The Penn family then lived on a small estate at Wanstead in Essex, and William had been for about two years a student at the Free Grammar School of Chigwell, founded by the late Archbishop of York, the most learned Dr. Samuel Harsnet.

Some idea of the educational atmosphere of Chigwell may be gained from the Articles of Foundation as drawn up by the Episcopalian founder. Among other things Dr. Harsnet proclaimed that "The master should be a good poet; of sound religion, neither papist nor puritan; of a grave behavior; no tippler, no puffer of tobacco; and, above all, apt in teaching and severe in government. Of reading there should be none but the Greek and Latin classics; no novelties, fictions, nor conceited modern writings."

The incarceration of the Admiral in the Tower caused his wife and child to move from Wanstead and take apartments near the Tower. This event detached young William from Chigwell School at the age of twelve, and he never returned to it.

The Admiral petitioned Cromwell that the Commander of the naval part of the expedition could not be held responsible for the conduct of the land forces. He had safely convoyed General Venables' army to the scene of operations, and landed his troops without accident at the place selected by the General for debarkation. He had then blockaded the coast to prevent reinforcements or supplies reaching the enemy from Spain. Finally, when the land forces retreated to their ships in much confusion and distress, he had put ashore a force of sailors and marines to cover their retreat and protect their reembarkation. After detaching a suitable squadron to convoy the transports back to England, he had cruised with the rest of his fleet on the station as long as his victualing would permit, and had "much harried the commerce of the enemy, and grievously beaten up his coasts."

The Protector accepted Admiral Penn's memorial, and after some investigation released him from the Tower, reinstated him in rank, and restored all his emoluments, including the special allowance of £365 a year, granted four years before for eminent services in the Dutch War of 1652. But he did not give the Admiral further command, or other employment at sea.

As a naval officer afloat Penn had supported the Cromwellian cause against the Dutch and the Spaniards, for the sake of England. But at heart he had never been anything but a royalist, a monarchist and a Stuartist.

As soon as Admiral Penn was released from the Tower, he moved his family back to the Wanstead home, and went himself to Ireland to clear title to an estate in County Cork, in which his father, Giles Penn, had long before acquired a lawful though disputed interest.

The next four years the Admiral was away from home nearly all the time. These four years, when William Penn was between twelve and sixteen, proved to be the determinative period of his career. His mind was growing far in advance of his years. His bodily development was as precocious as his brain. Both were abnormal. Among the first works, aside from text books, that young William Penn read were the works of John Saltmarsh, and his religious teachings, so clothed in mysticism and so beclouded in imagery, greatly influenced his untrained and inexperienced mind, far beyond its years in receptivity and susceptibility to the appeals of the strange, the unknown, and the beautiful.

Just at the time he was reading this Antinomian gospel and trying to understand its application to human affairs, a new sect, based upon the central doctrine of Saltmarsh, came to the front, the sect founded by George Fox, and named by him the "Society of Friends." Fox called his proselytes "Friends." The word "Quaker" was applied by their adversaries as a term of derision.

The origin of the epithet offered by the Puritan preacher Croxton is: "They are called 'Quakers,' a name they do much protest and wish to pass to and fro in the title of 'Friends'. But the describing them 'Quakers' is an invention of some who, from curiosity or mischief, stand about their preachings in the highways. It comes of their fashion of speaking with tremulous voice, shaking of the head, and making the body and limbs to quake violently like one in ague; their object being no doubt to press upon the mind of listener or beholder a sense that they be possessed, and almost torn and riven by the throes of the spirit within them."

Saltmarsh and Fox had much to do with William Penn's mental and moral tendencies, and thereby shaped the development of his character, and the history of his career.

GEORGE FOX

Judged by his antecedents, by the normal surroundings of his youth, and by the ambitions of his parents in his behalf, he was the last man to be reasonably regarded as a possible convert to Quakerism. But he was among the earliest; and he rose to a rank in the sect surpassing that of the founder himself.

At the age of sixteen William Penn matriculated as a fellow of Christ Church College, Oxford. He left Oxford and returned home in the fall of 1662, owing to difference of religious opinions between the faculty and himself. He could not reconcile its spiritual administration with his sense of religious liberty.

Sir William became very angry with his son when the latter came home from Oxford, and, after an altercation in which young Penn defended his conduct from what Sir William considered the Quaker point of view, the Admiral turned him out of doors. But through the mother's intercession the Admiral was soon reconciled to his son, and early in 1663 William was sent to visit Paris, where the Admiral hoped he might find social influences calculated to wean him from Quaker predilections.

Penn's visit to France was in the halcyon days of French Protestantism. It was twenty-two years before the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The great Amyrant was nearing the end of his illustrious and useful life at the head of the Saumur Seminary, center of Huguenot learning in France. Penn's stay in Paris was limited to about four months. Thence, desiring to perfect himself in the French language, he went to Saumur.

This seems to have been with the full approbation of his father. The Seminary was, of course, theological; but the doctrines and observances taught there by Amyrant were those of a refined and softened Calvinism—in a word, the Huguenot faith as we know it today.

William Penn spent nearly two years at Saumur. During this period he mastered the French language and acquired the French manners, and when he returned to England in 1664 his father rejoiced that his son had come back to him, after two years in France, "dressed in the garb and displaying the manners of a gentleman."

After a brief rest at home, young Penn, now in his twenty-first year, entered Lincoln's Inn as a student of law at the Admiral's suggestion. Sir William's ambition was that his son should become a statesman.

That Sir William was wise in his generation when he aspired to make a statesman of his precocious son is sufficiently attested by the later career of the son himself.

The William Penn of history was a statesman. He was born to be one. But he did not become one until he could not help it. His intermediate career as Quaker preacher, semi-martyr, and almost fanatic is forgotten in his unfading light as the founder of a great commonwealth; in his eminence as the pioneer of equal rights, universal suffrage, and unqualified popular sovereignty.

In 1670 Sir William Penn died in the old home at Wanstead, and his son William succeeded to all his estate. But William Penn could not inherit the baronetcy at that time, had it been hereditary, because such succession involved an oath of fealty to the Crown, which his devotion to the tenets of his religion would have forbidden him to make.

His succession to the estate gave him an income of about 1600 guineas a year (some $8000), which the vastly greater purchasing power of money in those days made equivalent to three times that sum now. Besides this, it made him a creditor of the King to the amount of about £16,000, with considerable accumulated interest; an inheritance destined to be the basis of the real greatness he soon afterward attained as a statesman, lawgiver, and human benefactor.

This relation of creditor to the King may be explained: Through the parsimony of Parliament, and the extravagance of the King in those days, Charles II was always poor in purse and a constant borrower. He borrowed from all whom his royal favor could convert into money lenders. He helped Admiral Penn to make prize money, in order that he might borrow from the Admiral the gold he had wrung from the defeated Dutch.

Charles was honest and would pay his debts when he could. When he could not pay he would borrow more. In the case of Admiral Penn he borrowed more, and paid nothing. By that means—providentially as it turned out—he owed the dying Admiral £16,000, with accumulated interest, and he paid the debt to the Admiral's heir with Pennsylvania.

From the year 1668 to 1678 William Penn spent his time in England and the Continent preaching Quakerism, printing Quaker tracts, and as a martyr in Newgate or the Tower.

In May, 1672, Penn married Gulielma Maria Springett, daughter of Colonel Sir William Springett. She was remarkably beautiful, with great strength of character, and many domestic virtues.

She was greatly helpful to her husband in the most trying period of his career. The persecutions that Penn suffered were many. He was tried at Old Bailey on an indictment accusing him of "riotous conduct" for preaching in Grace Street Church. He was later incarcerated in the Tower under conditions of almost equal atrocity.

In 1674 Penn had reached the age of thirty. He had given no signs of purpose or ambition to be anything else than an itinerant Quaker preacher and tract writer. The fortune inherited

from his father, coupled with that which his marriage brought him, was sufficient to release him from the hard task of making a living.

Considering the extent of his income, he lived frugally, and should have had a good annual surplus. But he did not. His income was expended as fast as it accrued, due to his benefices toward his needy brethren. The early Quakers were people of humble station and small means. Necessarily the fines and imprisonment bore heavily upon them, reducing many to penury. These William Penn was always ready to help with his last penny. These outlays, and the expenses of his own missionary work, kept his purse constantly drained. Moreover bad crops in Ireland made his tenants fall into arrears, and consequently his income fell away.

After a few years he began to be straitened for funds. By the end of 1677 his main reliance was the Springett estate of Worminghurst, which his wife brought to him. But he still held the debt of £16,000 that Charles II owed to his father.

It is not clear just when William Penn thought of asking the King to pay the debt of £16,000 by grant of territory in America, but in 1680 he sent his petition, which was referred by the King to the "Committee of the Privy Council for the Affairs of Trade and Plantations." (There was much question as to the boundaries of this tract, fearing it would infringe on other rights. The Dutch had conquered the original settlers of Swedes and Finns, and annexed the territory west of the Delaware to New York, making it part of that colony when conquered from the Dutch by the English in 1664.)

As the whole of the conquered Dutch colony had been given to the Duke of York, his grant must include the settlements of the Swedes and Finns on the west bank of the Delaware River. For these reasons Sir John Werden—then agent of the Duke of York—protested in behalf of the Duke against the transfer of this territory to Penn.

But Penn immediately laid the matter before the Duke of York in person, who instructed Sir John "to withdraw the letter of objection and inform the Committee that His Royal Highness is very willing Mr. Penn's request may meet with success."

A QUAKER TRIAL

The first meeting to consider Penn's petition was held June 24, 1680. They called Penn before them to explain the geography of his proposed grant. "To be bounded on the East by the Delaware River," he said, "on the South by the grant to Lord Baltimore; to run West as far as the latter grant, and northward to the forty=third parallel of latitude; it being assumed that latitude 40° should be the northern limit of Lord Baltimore's grant."

After much discussion and investigation, the forty=second parallel was adopted as the northern boundary of Penn's grant, and King Charles II signed the patent on March 4, 1681.

This document is now in the office of the Secretary of State at Harrisburg, Pa.

William Penn at first proposed to call this new colony New Wales, but this was objected to in the Council. He then suggested "Sylvania," but the King prefixed the syllable Penn, making it "Pennsylvania."

Penn at once drew up a form of government to be expressed in the charter. The Governorship is vested in a single head, that head is Penn, and the office is made hereditary, saving only allegiance to the Crown, with "an annual rental of two beaver skins delivered to Windsor Castle and one=fifth of all the gold and silver ore which shall be found within the limits of the grant aforesaid."

When the charter was signed there were about a thousand white inhabitants already in the territory granted to Penn, mostly Swedes and Finns, but a few Dutch traders. Penn's conditions of acquiring land were as follows:

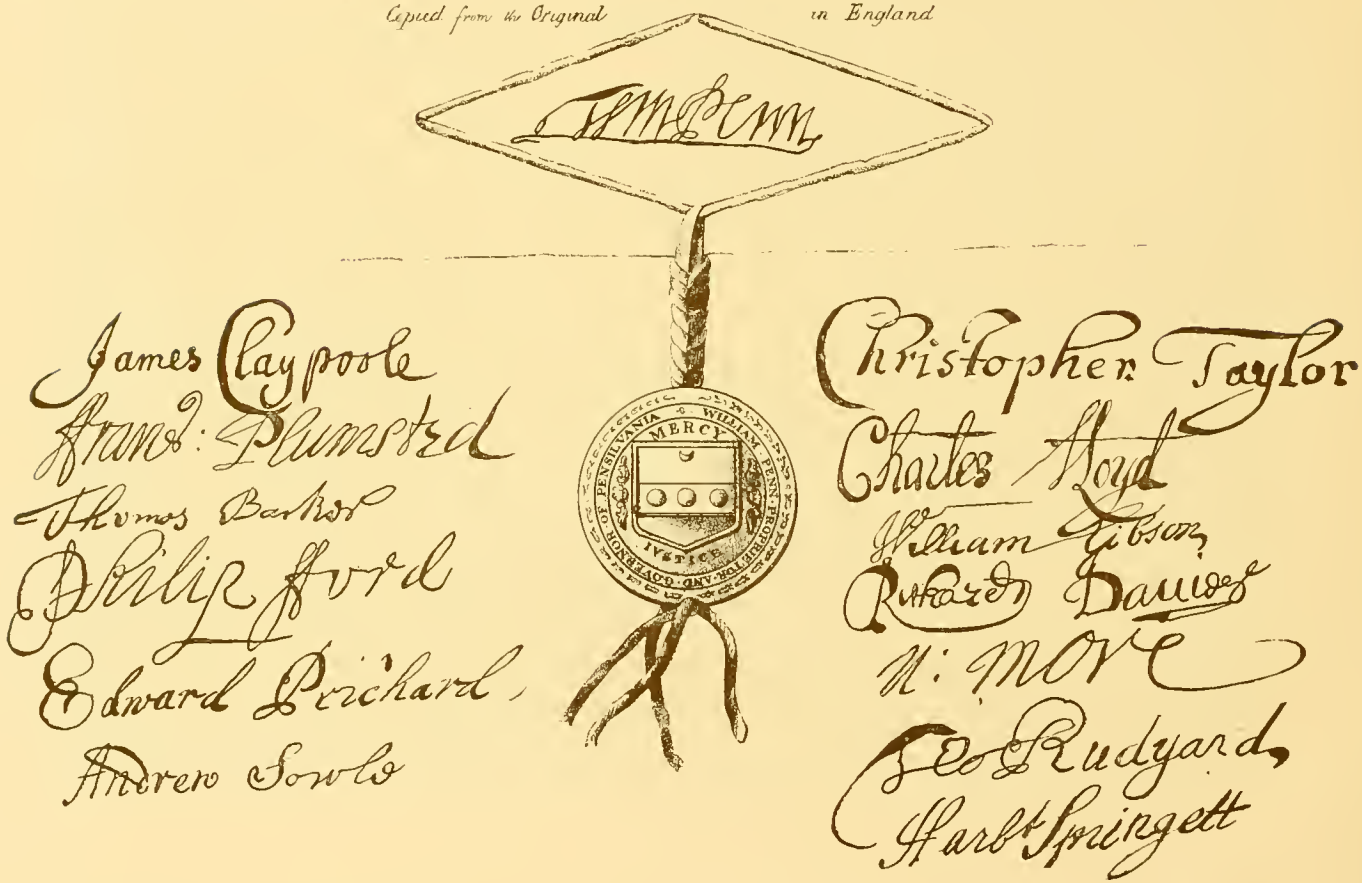
"Those who wish to buy Shares in the province can have 5000 acres for £500, and to pay annually one shilling quit=rent for each 100 acres; the quit=rent not to begin till 1684. Those who only rent are to pay one penny per acre, not to exceed 200 acres. Those who take over servants—that is, laborers—are to be allowed fifty acres per head and fifty acres to every servant when his time is expired."

The conditions of Penn's grant were noised about the three kingdoms. His prospectus was read at Quaker meetings, and explained at fairs and market places by Penn's agents.

Wm Penns Seal & Signature to the Pensylvania Charter.

WITH THE WITNESSES.

Copied from the Original in England



FRIENDS IN THE THAMES

WILLIAM PENN'S TREATY WITH THE INDIANS
When he founded the Province of Pennsylvania in North America, 1681

The first results were two ship loads of emigrants, nearly all Quakers, who sailed September, 1681; about a hundred families of 350 to 400 souls in all.

Penn also sent three Commissioners, Nathaniel Allen, John Bezar and William Crispin, to arrange for a settlement, lay out a town, and treat with the Indians.

CAVES USED BY EARLY SETTLERS
On the Delaware River, below Philadelphia

But on the arrival of these men they found Penn's deputy, William Markham, who had sailed previous to their instructions, had settled a site for the "great town," and had also built several small houses, and a number of "caves" had been excavated in the bluff of the river bank for temporary shelter, so the man who actually determined the practical foundation of Philadelphia was William Markham.

Penn instructed all of his agents in their dealings with the Indians to "be tender of offending them," to "deal fairly and openly with them," and to "be grave; they love not to be smiled on!"

Owing to the adjustment of the boundary question of Penn's grant, and his desire to take with him a thousand settlers in whom he had exercised a personal choice, his arrival in Pennsylvania was delayed until October, 1682. He had done all he could to promote the interests of the colony in England, and had arranged for a large emigration the following year. It was Penn's intention when he left England to reside permanently in the new colony, and the reason he did not take his

PENN LANDING AT BLUE ANCHOR INN

PENN LANDING AT CHESTER

wife and family with him was owing to the fact that she was in poor health, and her youngest child was barely two years old, but it was understood that they were to follow as soon as he could make a comfortable home for them. But owing to differences with Lord Baltimore over the boundary question, William Penn sailed for England again in 1684 expecting to return within the year with the boundary dispute finally settled.

Judgment was rendered November 13, 1685, but Penn remained in England for one cause or another until 1699. His career during this period was part courtier, part Quaker preacher and part "suspect."

He was arrested and placed under bonds charged with "treasonable correspondence" and conspiring to restore James to the throne of England. This practically prohibited his return to Pennsylvania until the end of 1693 when the charges were declared to be unfounded. After his release Penn was hopeful of immediate return but a new trouble awaited him. This was the illness of his wife, which terminated fatally in February, 1694.

In May, 1696, Penn married his second wife, Hannah Callowhill, of Bristol, England.

She proved a sturdy helpmate for his declining years, and also, to a considerable extent, reinforced his waning fortune.

She succeeded in compelling Penn to pay attention to his own affairs, to husband his resources and cut down his pension list of Quakers who had suffered for conscience sake.

In September, 1699, Penn decided to return to Pennsylvania, and accompanied by his wife and daughter, sailed from Southampton and after a rough voyage of nearly three months, arrived at Chester in December.

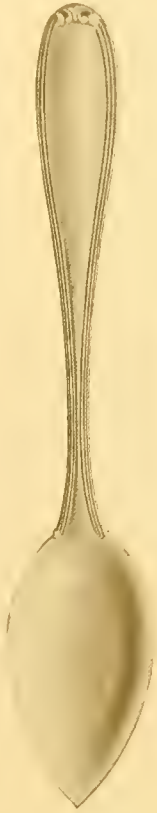
On July 30, 1718, William Penn died and under the terms of his will his wife became sole executrix, vested with all the powers of the proprietary pending the minority of the youngest of her three boys, to whom it had been devised jointly.

So well did she look after the estate that when she died in 1727, the three sons came into possession of the most magnificent domain on earth owned by private individuals, which eventually netted them, from the Governments of Pennsylvania and Great Britain together, £630,000 or $3,150,000 in money, besides their private estates in Pennsylvania.

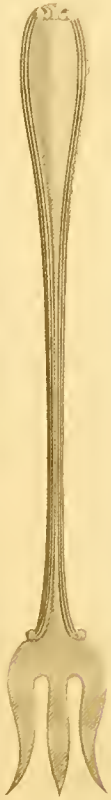
It is evident from the foregoing pages that William Penn, in every aspect of character, and in every relation of life, was a good man. It is equally apparent he was a great man. When the occasion arose he was a great statesman; at other times he was a great Quaker.

William Penns silver Tea Service.

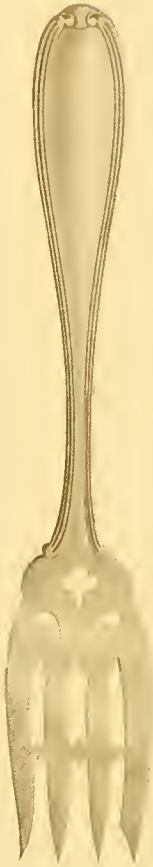
Table Knife
Dessert Knife
Table Fork
Dessert Fork
Dessert Spoon
Tea Spoon



Orange Spoon



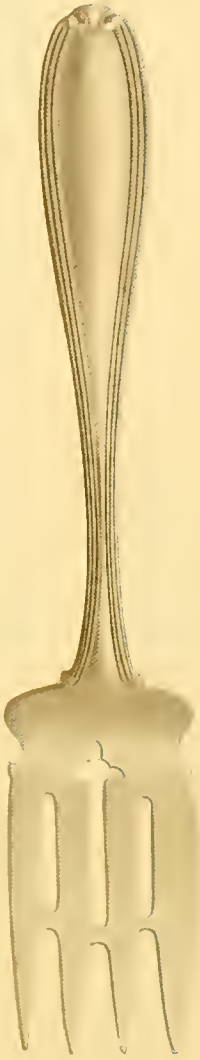
Oyster Fork



Ind. Salad Fork

Butter Spreader

Butter Knife



Cold Meat Fork

Pie Server

Gravy Ladle

Berry Spoon

Cake Server

Olive Spoon
Salad Spoon
Lettuce Spoon
Olive Fork
Salad Fork
Lettuce Fork

WILLIAM PENN, No. 7

(ACTUAL SIZE)

As shown above, the William Penn pattern of flatware is also made with the popular Empire wreath, hand engraved on the handle, which adds an artistic touch without detracting from the simple beauty of the design.